



Chairman Tom Cole

*Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

**Department of Labor FY2019 Budget Hearing
March 6, 2018
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Good morning, Mr. Secretary, and welcome. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. We are looking forward to hearing your testimony.

This hearing is to review the Department of Labor's fiscal year 2019 budget request. The Committee understands that much of the budget had already been written when Congress agreed to increase discretionary budget caps last month. We need to be cautious when considering this request to include both the budget and addendum in our review of the budget. The Committee's task is to carefully consider the Department's request and to make recommendations for the funding needs of critical programs including job training, worker safety, labor statistics, and others.

Mr. Secretary, I also want to thank you and commend the dedication and hard work of you and your staff. You have all been immensely helpful to this Committee and, without it, our work here would be much more difficult.

There are several issues I look forward to asking about this morning:

- Detail on the Department's apprenticeship initiatives;
- An update on the Department's efforts and approaches to reducing the skills gap;
- The reasoning behind requested increases in funding for federal enforcement in the Department's worker protection programs;
- And, how the Department intends to build upon the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments initiative and reduce improper payments more broadly within the Unemployment Insurance systems.

It is unfortunate that we are considering the fiscal year 2019 budget request before the final consolidated appropriations bill for fiscal year 2018 is enacted, however, we hope to have something done on that soon and to move quickly after that into the fiscal year 2019 appropriations process.

I'm sure members of the Subcommittee have many questions about the budget and policy issues at the Department, so without further delay, I'd like to remind members and our witness that we will abide by the five minute rule so that everyone will have a chance to get their questions asked and answered.

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